LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building

6901 S. Oglesby Ave.

Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, March 6, 2008

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Arnold L. Randall, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building

6901 S. Oglesby Ave.

Built: **1928-29**
Architect: **Paul Frederick Olsen**

Located in the South Shore neighborhood, the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building is a handsome and noteworthy tall apartment building, a significant building type in the history of Chicago architecture and neighborhood development. Built as a cooperative apartment, and remaining one today, 6901 Oglesby exemplifies this important early stage of real-estate history in Chicago. The eleven-story brick-and-limestone-clad building is an excellent example of the English Gothic architectural style. Its exterior and first-floor interior public spaces, including a wood-paneled reception room with an intricate plaster ceiling, display fine detailing in traditional building materials. Through its refined design and excellent craftsmanship, 6901 Oglesby epitomizes the high-rise apartment buildings of the 1920s that form the historic basis for Chicago's visually distinctive lakefront.

THE TALL APARTMENT BUILDING IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY CHICAGO

The history of Chicago's tall apartment buildings, including the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building, should be seen in the context of rising land and labor costs through the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which gradually made apartment living in fashionable downtown and lakefront neighborhoods necessary for all but the most wealthy. Such buildings were first built in the 1890s in the wake of real-estate speculation associated with the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Culminating with the construction of dozens of high-rise cooperative apartment buildings along the Lake Michigan shoreline on the City's North and South Sides, including 6901 Oglesby, they reshaped Chicago in a visually, socially, and economically dramatic way. It was the demand for such tall apartment living that created the image of today's

Chicago with its memorable "wall" of high-rise apartment buildings meeting the lakefront as a great man-made "cliff."

In the years before the Great Depression and World War II, these buildings, with few exceptions, were designed in historic architectural styles, including both variations on classical and medieval stylistic traditions. 6901 Oglesby, with its 11-story mass rising a block from the South lakefront open space of the South Shore Country Club and cloaked in a refined expression of the English Gothic Revival style, is a handsomely-executed example of this important historic theme of Chicago historic neighborhood development.

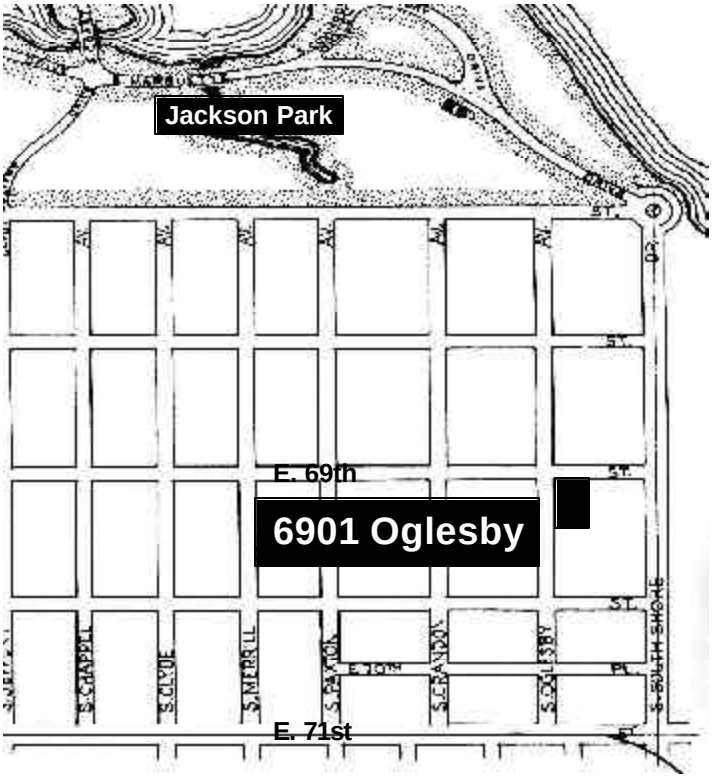
When Chicago was first settled in the 1830s, and as it grew through its first forty years as a burgeoning frontier settlement, it was a city of houses and cottages. Only the poor found themselves living in multi-unit tenements, and even these buildings did not reach the size and squalor of those in New York's working-class neighborhoods of the mid-19th century.

But starting in the 1870s, land prices began to make it increasingly necessary for Chicagoans of greater means and social standing to live in multi-unit buildings. Small flat buildings of two and three units began to be built in many Chicago neighborhoods. These "two-flats" and "three-flats" became the predominant building type in Chicago working- and middle-class neighborhoods throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the City annexed neighboring townships and sprawled across much of Cook County. In the years on either side of World War I up to the economic cataclysm of the Great Depression, streets upon streets of such small-scale flat buildings, augmented by "six-flats," created a basis of residential comfort and stability for countless Chicago families.

Chicago's upper-middle- and upper-income families, on the other hand, were more resistive to apartment living, considering it "déclassé" to live either above or below other families. Initially, row houses provided a solution that recognized ever-increasing land prices that forced the social respectability of such families to give way to economic realities, and rows of such attached houses were built in fashionable neighborhoods on the South, West and (to a lesser extent) North Sides, starting in the late 1860s and extending into the 1890s.

Even this more land-intensive type of single-family house, by the 1880s, did not answer the twin needs of upper-middle-class Chicagoans who wanted to live in desirable neighborhoods but had not the monetary means to build single-family houses. It was during this decade that the first self-consciously fashionable apartment buildings were built. Typically called "flats" and patterned after both fashionable Parisian and New York apartment buildings, such buildings were low in scale (typically three to five stories in height) and attempted, through multiple entrances and picturesque bays and rooflines, to resemble the social respectability of row houses. Almost all of these "first-generation" upper-middle-class flat buildings have since been demolished. The earliest and most significant of those that remain is the Hotel St. Benedict Flats at 40-52 E. Chicago Ave., designed in 1882 by James J. Egan in a polychromatic version of the medieval-inspired High Victorian Gothic architectural style. (It was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1996.)





Top: The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building was built in 1928-1929 as a luxury cooperative apartment building designed by architect Paul Frederick Olsen.

Left: It is located on the southeast corner of E. 69th St. and S. Oglesby Ave. in the northeastern edge of the South Shore neighborhood, close to Jackson Park to the north, the South Shore Cultural Center (originally the South Shore Country Club) to the east across South Shore Drive.

The first construction of "tall apartment buildings" of typically eight to twelve floors occurred in reaction to the real-estate boom brought about from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, held in South-Side Chicago's Jackson Park. A number of tall apartment buildings, taking advantage of building technology advances such as steel-frame construction and safety elevators, were built in the neighborhoods both north and south of Chicago's Loop, as well in outlying neighborhoods such as Hyde Park, Englewood, and Lake View. Most were built to house visitors to the fair. Many remained hotels afterwards, albeit often catering to long-term residents, while others were converted to apartment use. Most have been demolished in intervening years. Two of the finest of these "first-generation" tall apartment buildings are the Brewster Apartments at 2800 N. Pine Grove Ave., built in 1893 to the design of Enoch Hill Turnock, and the Yale Apartments, built at 6565 S. Yale Ave. in 1892-93 and designed by John T. Long. Both were built in the then-popular Romanesque Revival architectural style, based on medieval architectural precedents. (Both are designated Chicago Landmarks.)

During the remainder of the 1890s and the early 20th-century years before World War I, larger Chicago apartment buildings constructed during this period mostly catered to upper-middle-class families wanting visual tastefulness and the latest in mechanical conveniences, including steam heat and kitchen appliances. Most of these apartment buildings were relatively low in scale in comparison with later 1920s buildings, and many were courtyard buildings, arranged in C- and E-shaped plans around landscaped courtyards opening off streets. Multiple entrances serving interior circulation hallways and stairs, and each serving typically six apartments, maintained greater privacy despite the larger actual number of apartments. These apartment buildings were almost always designed in the same variations on Classical and medieval architectural styles, although the innovative Prairie style and influences from Central European architectural innovators encouraged both a sense of horizontality and non-historic ornament in many buildings. The Pattington Apartments at 660-700 W. Irving Park Rd., designed in 1902 by architect David Postle, is one of the earliest and grandest of these courtyard apartment buildings.

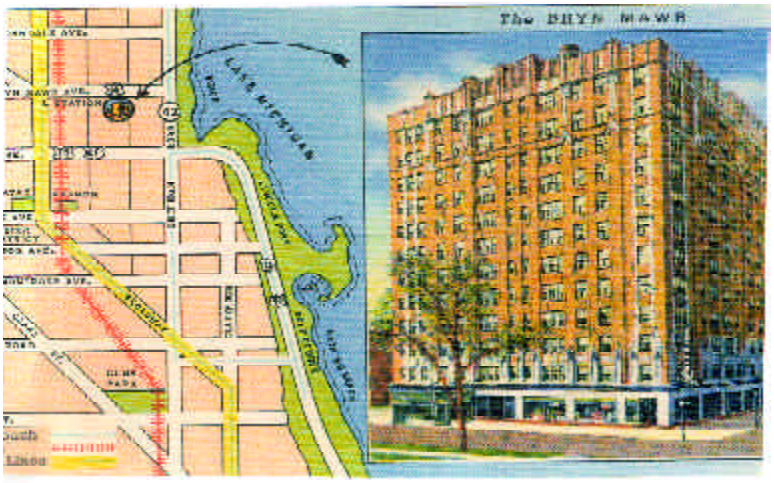
Other apartment buildings of this pre-World War I period were tall apartment buildings, built in fashionable neighborhoods, especially the Near North Side Gold Coast neighborhood, the Lake View neighborhood farther north on the Lake Michigan lakefront, and Hyde Park on Chicago's South Side, which increasingly was the South Side neighborhood of fashionable apartment living. Tall apartment buildings in these neighborhoods often borrowed architectural forms such as rounded and three-sided bays first from Chicago School commercial buildings built in the 1880s. Such visually dynamic forms, combined with typically Classical-style ornament around doors, windows and rooflines, characterize such buildings as the McConnell Apartments at Astor and Division Streets, built in 1897 and designed by noted Chicago School architects Holabird and Roche in the heart of the increasingly upper-class Gold Coast; the Commodore Apartments at Broadway and Surf in the Lake View neighborhood, designed in 1897 by architect Edmund Krause; and the Bryson Apartment Building on Lake Park Ave. in Hyde Park, constructed in 1901 to designs by Solon S. Beman. (The Bryson was demolished during Hyde Park urban renewal efforts of the post-World War II era. The McConnell and Commodore Apartments are located in the Astor Street and Surf-Pine Grove Chicago Landmarks Districts, respectively.)







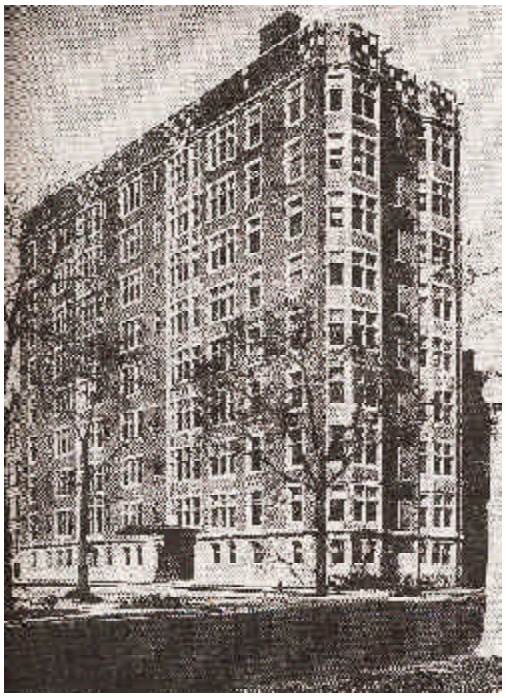




Apartment buildings form a very large and important part of Chicago's neighborhood streetscapes. Typical examples built primarily for working- and middle-class residents during the late 19th and early 20th centuries include (top left) a three-flat in the Armitage-Halsted Chicago Landmark District; (top right) rows of 3-story apartment buildings at 68th and Clyde (located within 2 blocks of 6901 Oglesby); (middle left) a courtyard building in the Surf-Pine Grove District; (middle right) a common-corridor apartment building in the Newport Avenue District; and (bottom) the Bryn Mawr Apartment Hotel, designated as part of the Bryn Mawr-Belle Shore Apartment Hotels designation.







Chicago's upper- and upper-middle-class familes, concerned with contemporary norms of social propriety and respectiability, were at first reluctant to embrace apartment living. One of the earliest apartment buildings intended for an upscale clientele was (top) the Hotel St. Benedict Flats at Wabash and Chicago Aves., designed in 1882 to imitate more respectable row houses. (It is a designated Chicago Landmark.)

By the early 20th century, Chicago's elite families began to accept apartment living. Two seminal examples in the Gold Coast neighborhood were (bottom left) the Marshall Apartments at 1100 N. Lake Shore Dr. and (bottom right) 1130 N. Lake Shore Dr., built in 1905 and 1910 respectively. 1130 N. Lake Shore Dr. is believed to be Chicago's first cooperative apartment, where individuals owned their own apartments. (Both have been demolished).

It was also during the years immediately preceeding World War I that Chicago's most economically-elite families began to live in apartments. Three upscale apartment buildings in the Gold Coast neighborhood—increasingly the main concentration of the City's most monetarily and socially-advantaged families—were constructed during these years. Architect Benjamin Marshall designed and built in 1906 a (by today's standards) rather modestly-scaled, eight-story apartment building at 1100 N. Lake Shore Dr. The first such building on elite Lake Shore Drive, the Marshall Apartments (demolished) provided rental apartments of a scale and grandeur that attracted families of wealth and social stature to apartment living that a few years before would not have considered such a life. In 1910 architect Howard Van Doren Shaw designed a nine-story apartment building at 1130 N. Lake Shore Dr. to house himself and several friends. Then, in 1912, Benjamin Marshall designed arguably the grandest apartment building ever built in Chicago. Located at 1550 N. State St. and overlooking Lincoln Park to the north and Lake Michigan to the east, this elaborately-detailed, terra-cotta-clad apartment building contained expansive apartments that laid to rest the argument that apartment living could not equal the splendor and scale of mansions.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVE APARTMENTS IN THE 1920S

Although apartment buildings both large and small were built in the years before 1920, it was during the decade of the "Roaring Twenties" that tall cooperative apartment buildings became an important presence in Chicago's burgeoning skyline. This new legal mechanism of cooperative ownership of apartment buildings allowed individuals to own their own apartments. Combined with both economic factors and changes in government regulation of land use in Chicago, it greatly encouraged apartment living among Chicago's upper- and upper-middle-class families.

The 1920s was a "golden age" of apartment construction in general. For middle-class families, two- and three-flats were built throughout new neighborhoods on the developed edge of the City. In neighborhoods near the lake or elevated rail lines, somewhat larger-scale development in the form of six-flats and courtyard and common-corridor apartment buildings were built. The rising number of single people living and working in the rapidly expanding economy of Chicago especially sought apartments suitable for their budgets and needs. These were often apartment hotels, built for long-term residency but with hotel amenities such as common dining rooms, room service, and housekeeping services. Until the advent of the non-historic Art Deco architectural style around 1928, such middle-class apartment buildings continued to be built in historic architectural styles such as Classicism and variations on medievalism.

The "crème de la crème" of 1920s-era apartment construction were the tall apartment buildings typically 10- to 20-stories in height that were built in scores up and down Chicago's Lake Michigan shoreline. Fashionable residential lakefront neighborhoods such as Lake View and Edgewater on the north and Hyde Park and South Shore on the south, where the first round of development had emphasized single-family houses and small flat buildings, suddenly experienced a dramatic change in scale with the construction of residential skyscrapers. These tall buildings began to replace existing mansions or were built on previously undeveloped land, towering over existing homes. In neighborhoods such as Lake View and Hyde Park, this first wave of tall

apartment building construction saw such skyscrapers lining Lincoln and Burnham Parks. In Edgewater and South Shore, tall apartment buildings more often were built as free-standing high-rises amidst lower-scale development. Together, they form the historic core of today's dramatic Chicago lakefront skyline.

Economic changes in home living in the 1920s

The impetus for this residential high-rise development was multifold. First, economic changes brewing before World War I that made large-scale houses in Chicago more costly and difficult to run came to a head. Restrictions in immigration enacted by the United States government in the early 1920s exacerbated the already-existing "servant problem." Mansions and even large-scale houses required large service staffs for their proper maintenance, and freshly-arrived European immigrants had traditionally filled house staffs in all but the highest-status positions such as housekeeper and butler. Without such numbers of new immigrants, supply-and-demand saw the dramatic raising of salaries, especially since the booming economy of the 1920s provided other ways than service to make a living.

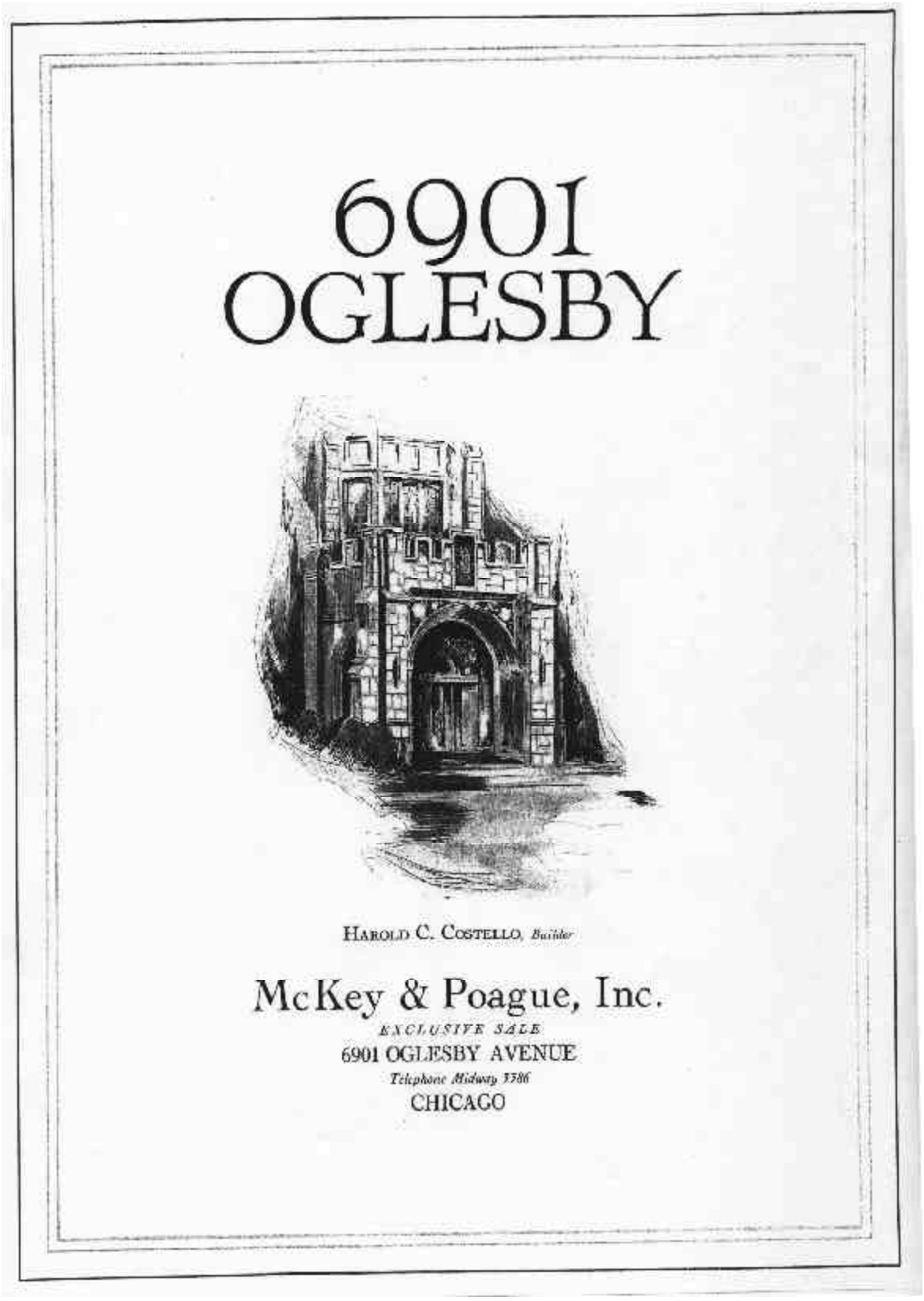
When combined with the advent of income taxes, even the wealthy found themselves reevaluating their housing options. Many who had been keeping a large city house as well as an expansive country estate cut back, selling their in-town mansion and moving into a more convenient and economical apartment.

Legalization of cooperative apartment buildings

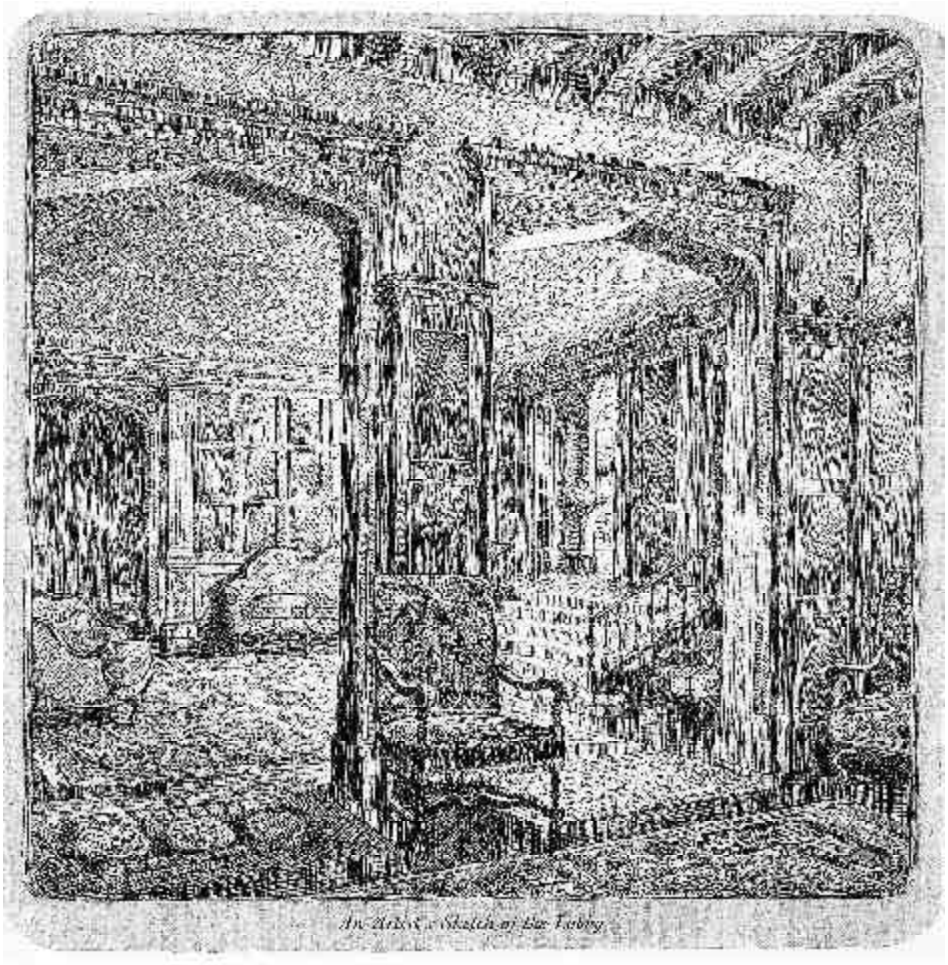
Changes in residential living were also encouraged by changes in Illinois real-estate law that made it possible for apartment dwellers to own their own apartments through corporations called "cooperatives." Illinois had traditionally banned the ability of corporations to buy and develop land, and through the 1910s, real-estate construction and speculation had been a business that regularly promised either personal boom or bust for individuals responsible for the fortunes of their real-estate endeavors.

Corporations owning residential buildings did exist before the 1920s, but they were after-the-fact entities, put in place after buildings were completed. This was the case with architect Howard Van Doren Shaw's 1130 N. Lake Shore Dr. building, generally considered the first cooperative apartment building in Chicago. Shaw and several friend-investors paid an agent to purchase land and construct the building in 1910. Then after completion, a corporation was formed to own the building, with Shaw and his friends owning shares in the corporation that allowed them to acquire leases to their apartments.

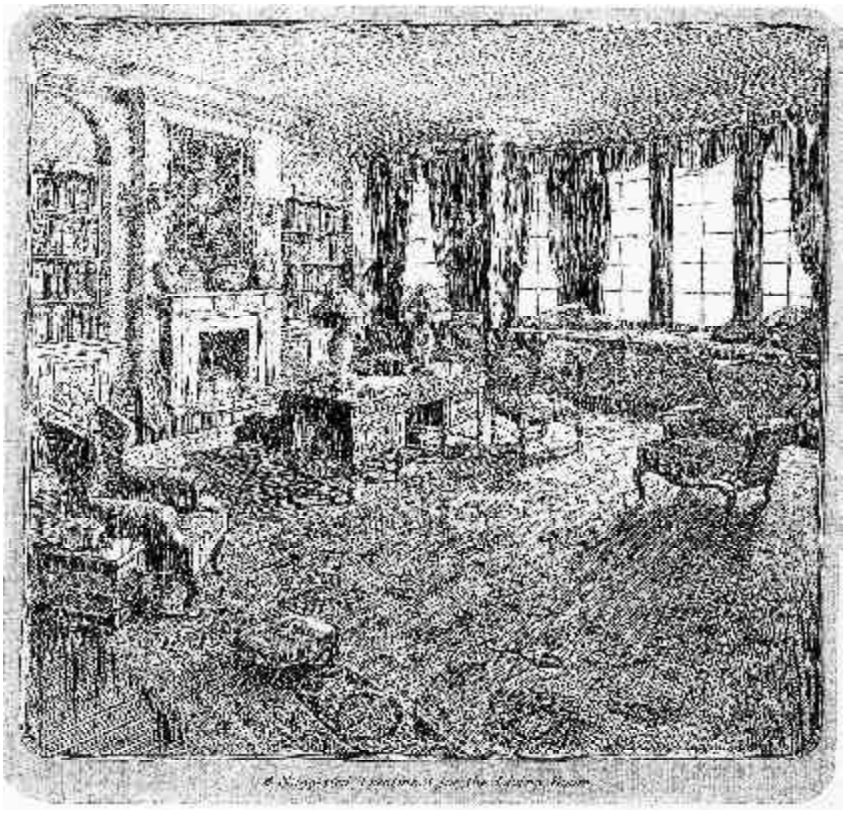
Changes in Illinois law enacted in 1919 and 1922 took away the need for the middle-man agent. Corporations could be formed with the express purpose of buying land, removing existing buildings, building an apartment building, and selling corporation shares that allowed the shareholder a right to an apartment and a say in the operation of the building. Cooperative shareholders, through their corporation ownership, were given leases, typically 99 years in length with rights of renewal for specific apartments in the building. The size and location of apartments in a cooperative apartment building could vary, requiring a greater or lesser investment in corporation shares. Like stockholders in any corporation, shareholders in



Cooperative apartment buildings in the 1920s were usually advertised through handsomely-printed sales prospectuses, which included renderings of the proposed buildings' exteriors and interiors. Pictured here is the cover of the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building sales prospectus.



The 6901 Oglesby prospectus also contained sketches showing the first-floor public reception room and a "suggested treatment" of a typical apartment living room.



cooperative apartment corporations were entitled to sell their stocks and transfer their apartment leases to other individuals, either existing shareholders or outside individuals. However, the collective corporation ownership, through the cooperative's officers and board members, had veto power over new shareholders. This allowed shareholders to prevent socially or economically questionable individuals from acquiring apartments in cooperative buildings, and lent an air of refinement and exclusivity that most cooperative owners sought.

Cooperative apartment buildings sometimes were built by individuals that were friends or business acquaintances, and these buildings had the soundest financial basis and most social cachet. For example, 2430 N. Lake View Ave. was built in 1927 to house some of the most important industrial families of Chicago, including the Marshall Fields, the Cudahys of meat-packing renown, and the Thornes of the Montgomery Ward mail-order company (and also the Thorne Miniature Rooms of The Art Institute of Chicago). These buildings rarely advertised apartments on the open market, depending upon word-of-mouth to fill the few apartments not already taken by founding corporation shareholders.

Most cooperative apartment buildings, however, including 6901 Oglesby, were speculative ventures. Corporations were formed by developers, often partnered with an architect, and building prospectuses were widely disseminated in order to attract investors. These prospectuses were typically finely printed and elaborately detailed, with renderings of building's exteriors, common interior spaces, typical apartment rooms, and sample floor plans. Architects who specialized in these buildings, including Paul Frederick Olsen (the architect of 6901 Oglesby), Quinn & Christensen, McNally & Quinn, Robert DeGolyer, and Benjamin Marshall, often received cooperative stock as partial or even total payment for their services. Often architects worked repeatedly for the same developer; Harold C. Costello, the developer of 6901 Oglesby worked a number of times with architect Olsen. In addition, cooperative developers often worked in specific neighborhoods where they were well-known and were familiar with the market. Costello appears to have focused his real-estate ventures in the South Shore neighborhood, where 6901 Oglesby is located. The 6901 Oglesby sales prospectus lists the building as the ninth cooperative apartment building built by Costello.

Once a sufficient number of cooperative shares were sold, shareholders elected a board of directors to run the corporation and manage the building. Typically, boards hired management companies to handle day-to-day operations and staffing such as janitorial service, doormen, repairmen, garage attendants, and gardeners.

Cooperative apartment corporations could be structured so that all apartments were to be occupied by shareholders. These so-called "100% cooperative buildings" were considered the best socially and the soundest financially. 6901 Oglesby was a 100% cooperative building. Other cooperatives, built as more speculative ventures, contained some apartments reserved for cooperative shareholders and others for renters. The logic behind this legal arrangement is that renters subsidized the costs of maintaining the building to the advantage of shareholders. In these buildings, shareholder apartments were generally larger, more finely finished, and had better views than apartments intended for renters.

Cooperative apartment buildings were touted by real-estate officials throughout the 1920s. In the years before 1963, when Illinois legalized condominium ownership, cooperatives were the only way to own an apartment. During the 1920s, 100 cooperative apartment buildings of the "100 per cent variety" had been built in Chicago, according to a 1930 pamphlet on cooperative apartments published by the Chicago Real Estate Board. These building represented 3,414 apartments containing 18,831 rooms, housing more than 20,000 people. The total value of these buildings in 1930 was estimated to be over $80,000,000.

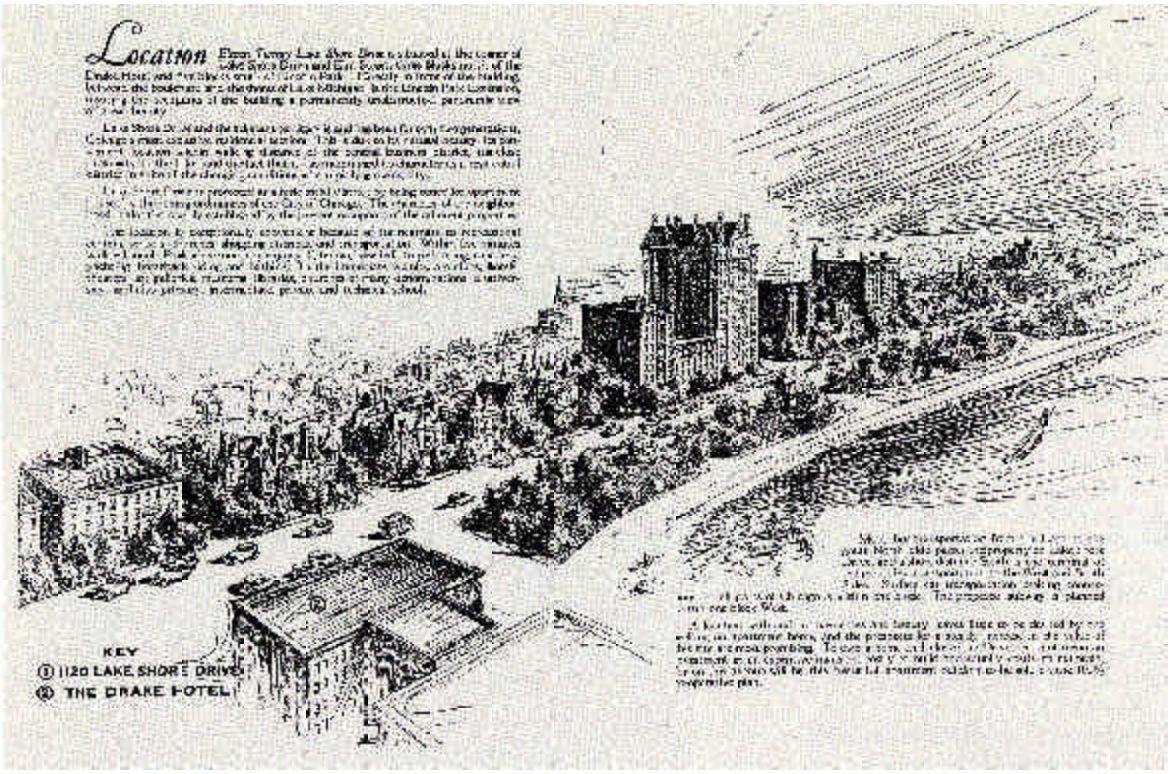
Chicago's zoning ordinance of 1923

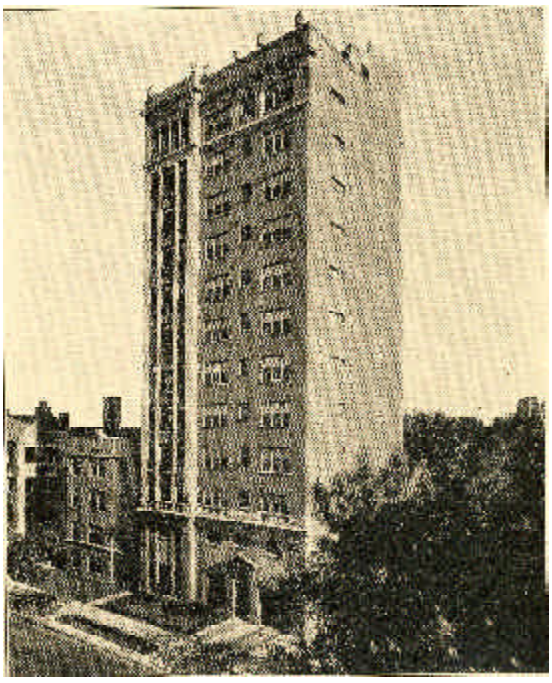
At almost the same time as the legalization of cooperative apartments in 1922, the City of Chicago passed its first zoning ordinance in 1923. Legal mechanisms to control land use and building size, scale, massing, and setbacks had previously existed in Chicago, including restrictive covenants and frontage consents, but city-wide land-use planning had been lacking. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park, with its widely-praised "White City," and the subsequent *Plan of* Chicago in 1909 focused Chicagoans' attention on the benefits of comprehensive and wide-ranging city planning for what its citizens increasingly saw as a world-class city in the making. New York had passed a pioneering zoning ordinance in 1916 that regulated both land use and building size, scale, and form. Many citizens felt that Chicago deserved no less.

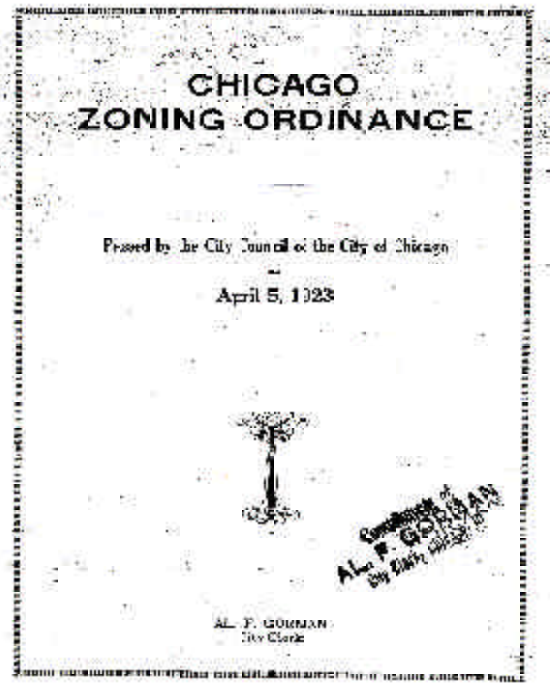
The resulting 1923 zoning ordinance was relatively simple by today's standards, but it laid out goals for separating land uses such as commercial, industrial, and residential into their own defined areas. It also set what were called "volume districts" that regulated building size and massing. The ordinance attempted to take into account already existing conditions as well as to encourage already-visible trends, including the transformation of Chicago's lakefront into a concentration of commercial skyscrapers in the Central Area and residential high-rises rising both north and south along the City's lakefront. (The largest "volume districts" set forth by the zoning ordinance were downtown and in lakefront neighborhoods.)

Seemingly overnight, formerly single-family neighborhoods such as Lake View and Edgewater on the north were being transformed into apartment building districts. South Side neighborhoods such as more-established Hyde Park and still-developing South Shore also saw a great deal of tall apartment building construction, almost all of it either cooperative apartment buildings or apartment hotels. In these communities, especially in South Shore, tall apartment buildings tended not to form "walls" along the lakefront, but rose individually or in small groups of two or three, unlike in Hyde Park or North Side neighborhoods.

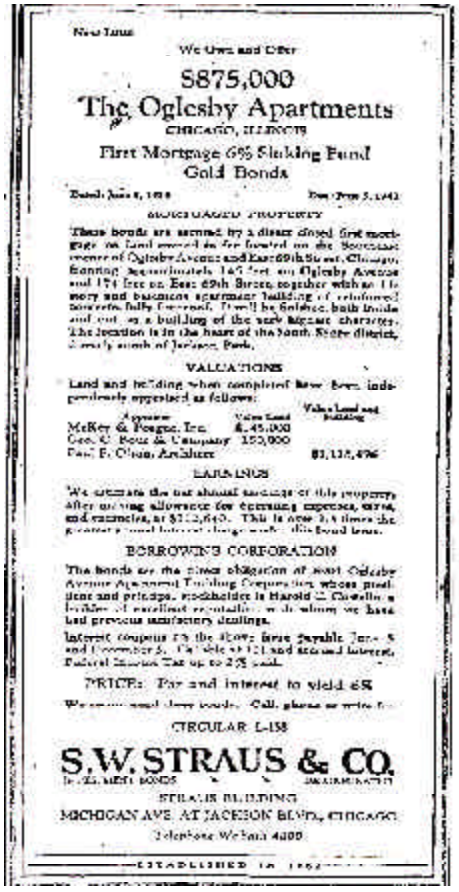
By the early 1930s, when building construction had largely ground to a halt due to the Great Depression, the first-generation buildings of today's high-rise lakefront arguably one of Chicago's most distinctive visual assets were in place, including 6901 Oglesby.







Chicago's first zoning ordinance, enacted in 1923, provided a legal framework for the creation of large-scale apartment neighborhoods and set the stage for Chicago's visually distinctive lakefront, where miles of high-rise apartment buildings form a man-made "cliff." The 1920s saw low-scale single-family neighborhoods change radically as these new large-scale apartment buildings were constructed. Top: This illustration from a publication for 1120 N. Lake Shore Dr. (the tallest building in the rendering) illustrates the dramatic change in neighborhood scale that these 1920s tall apartment buildings, including 6901 Oglesby, brought to their neighborhoods. Bottom left: 707 W. Junior Terrace, designed as a cooperative apartment building by 6901 Oglesby's architect, Paul Frederick Olsen, further illustrates the dramatic change in scale typical of 1920s Chicago lakefront development. Bottom right: The cover from the 1923 zoning ordinance.



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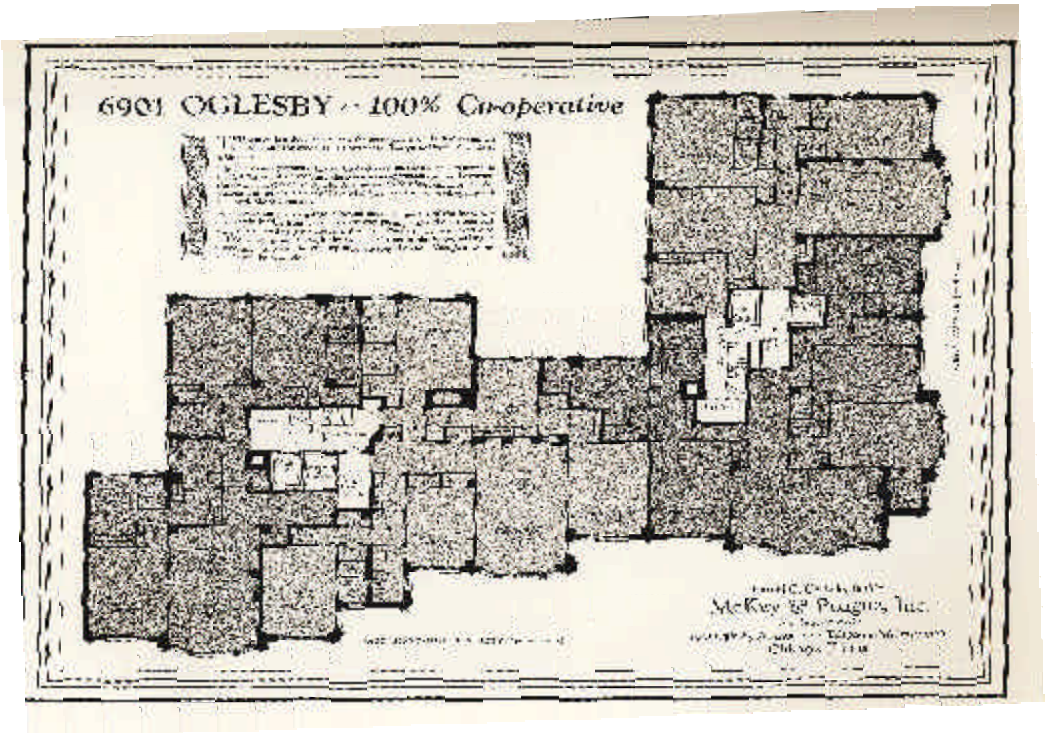
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The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building was conceived as a "100% cooperative building," where all apartments would be owned and occupied by owners. Top left: A *Chicago Tribune* advertisement touting the sale of shares in the corporation constructing the building. Top right and bottom: A perspective and typical upper-floor plan of the building published in a prospectus used to entice buyers.

BUILDING HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

On April 14, 1928, the *Chicago Tribune* announced the upcoming construction of a new 11-story cooperative apartment building intended for the southeast corner of E. 69th St. and S. Oglesby Ave. in the South Shore community area. Harold C. Costello, already known for smaller-scale cooperative apartment buildings in the neighborhood, was the developer. The building was to cost approximately $1,300,000 and contain 40 apartments of five, six, and seven rooms each.

The location for the building was an excellent one and typical of sites chosen for the best cooperative apartment buildings being constructed in the 1920s. It was located in the northeastern corner of South Shore, two blocks from Jackson Park to the north and one block from the lakefront South Shore Country Club to the east. Two blocks to the south, the South Shore Railroad commuter line ran down E. 71st St., at the time one of Chicago's best neighborhood shopping streets, providing quick and convenient service to the Loop. In addition, South Shore Drive, a block to the east, provided easy automobile connections to Lake Shore Drive and downtown Chicago, while express buses to the Loop ran from South Shore as well. Across E. 69th St., the open space surrounding the 68th St. water pumping station, promised excellent views from most apartments. (This space is now a small community park.)

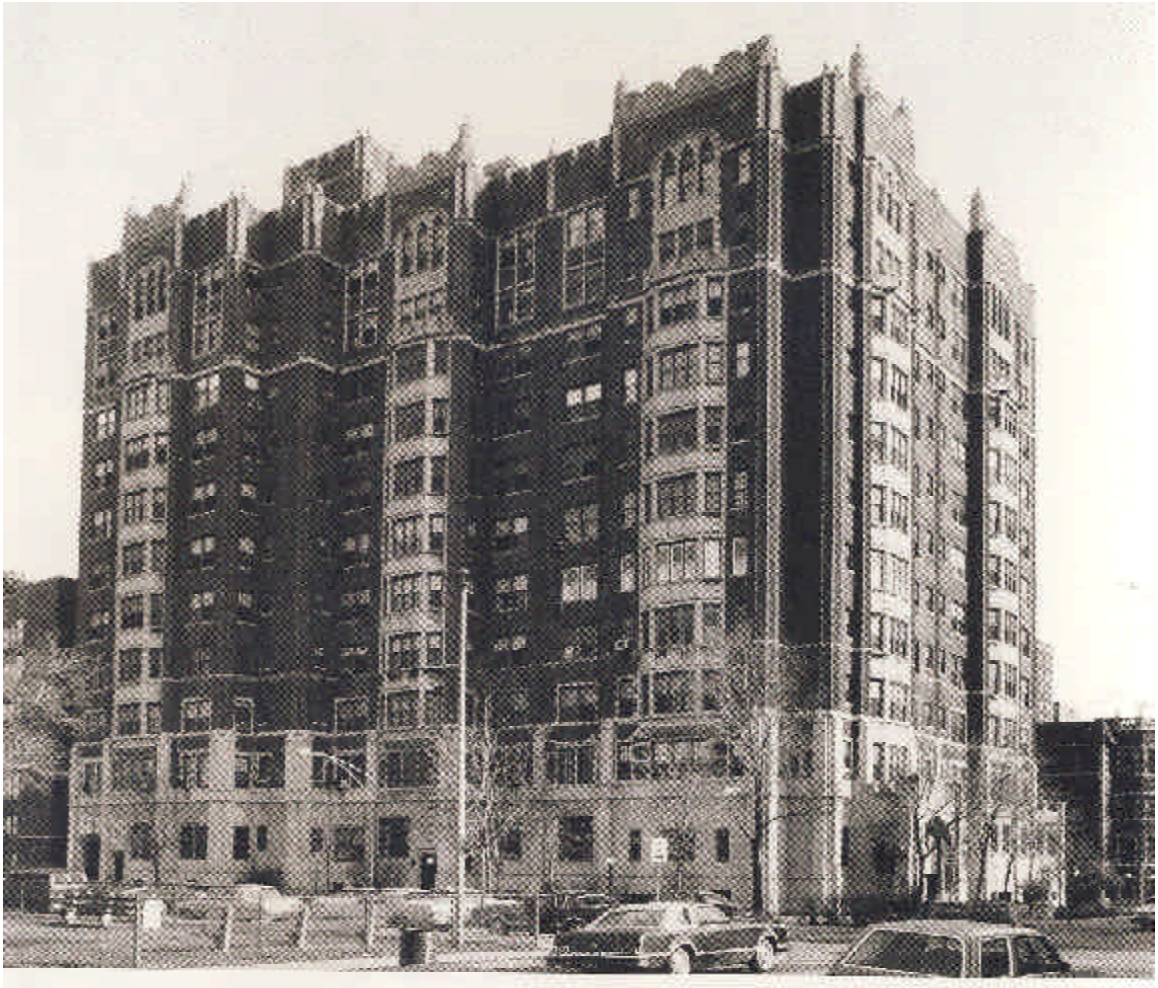
When completed in 1929, 6901 Oglesby, as it was named, occupied a lot that was 145 feet along Oglesby and 175 feet along E. 69th St. Unlike many tall apartment buildings of the 1920s, the building did not cover the entire site. Instead, the building's 69th St. elevation stepped back from its eastern corner in a series of undulating bays that provided both a wide swath of landscaped yard along the street and a visual sense of movement. Eleven stories in height, the building was built utilizing red tapestry brick and gray Bedford limestone over steel-frame construction. A partially underground attached parking garage tucked at the rear of the building housed 36 cars and was directly accessible from the main apartment building. The overall shape of the building's plan (minus the garage) is a rather free-form C-shape, meant to provide space for a first-floor open-air terrace atop the garage roof, historically used as common space for apartment owner parties and recreation, while maximizing views and air for apartments above.

The overall architectural style for 6901 Oglesby is based on the medieval forms and details of English Gothic architecture. The building's design is idiomatic of other tall apartment buildings of the period in that the finest-textured and –detailed ornament is at the ground level where pedestrians can view it most easily especially around the building's chief entrance facing Oglesby and around windows, atop projecting bays, and along the building's irregular, visually picturesque roof parapet. The building's overall visual character is restrained and dignified, which is typical of the best-quality cooperative apartment buildings of the period. It was said in contemporary newspaper accounts and by later historians that apartment hotels were ornamented rather splashily in order to draw residents, while cooperative apartment buildings were designed in a more subdued manner to emphasize the good taste and social respectability of apartment owners.

Bottom: 6901 Oglesby is an eleven-story building built of red tapestry brick and gray Bedford lime-stone over a steel-frame structure. It is designed in the Gothic Revival architectrual style, a historic style considered by Chicagoans of the 1920s to convey a sense of propri-ety, domesticity, and gentility.



Right: Its roofline is picturesque in its use of varying setbacks and Gothic Revival motives, including arched windows and finials.







The building's overall form is unusually "plastic," meaning that its wall surfaces recede inward, push outward, and fold to create a sense of visual dynamism that is unusual for large-scale, tall apartment buildings of the 1920s.

6901 Oglesby's main entrance faces Oglesby Avenue itself. Bottom: A view of the projecting entrance porch, designed with Gothic-style arches, crenellation, and a decorative shield and tracery. Top left: A view of the shield bearing the building's address. Top right: The continuous gray limestone-clad bay rising above the entrance is repeated on both street elevations of the building.







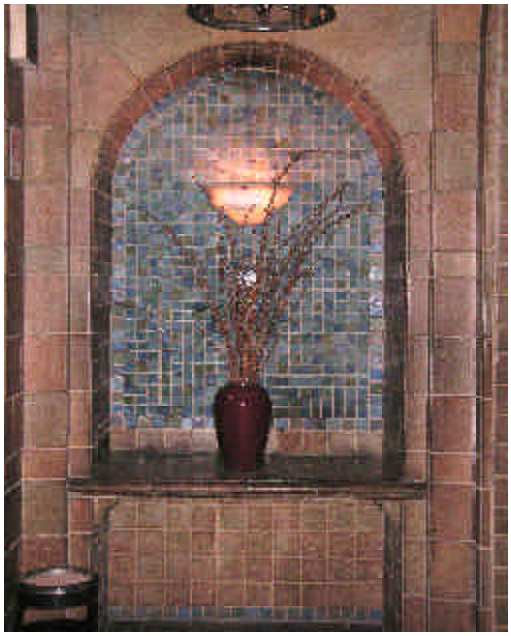




The building's Gothic-arched entrance porch shelters a vaulted-arched area paved with flagstones. The wooden entrance doors, sidelights, and transoms, all ornamented with leaded glass, are set within a stone Gothic-style archway.









Inside the building's main entrance is a lavishly detailed mail vestibule, with a variety of both decorative and functional niches and decorated with a variety of multi-colored tilework.



The building's first floor is clad in gray Bedford limestone along street elevations. Above, red tapestry brick is predominantly used, while Bedford limestone is used for shallowly-projecting three-sided bays, window sills and other decoration, and rooftop ornament. Even the building's rear (south and east) elevations are clad with red face brick and trimmed with Bedford limestone. (It was considered a sign of good "neighborliness" in the 1920s for tall apartment buildings, already shattering established building heights of residential neighborhoods, to use face brick, rather than common brick, for side and rear elevations. Newspaper accounts of the period referred to "shirtwaist" buildings, those using face brick only on street facades, with disdain.)

The building's facades are more architecturally "plastic" than the average tall apartment building of the period. Not only do the aforementioned limestone-clad bays break the dominant wall plane, but larger wall planes project and recede in a visually-interesting manner. Wall and bay edges are further articulated with triangular brick piers that rise the height of the building, adding an additional sense of detail and visual "movement" to the building's facades. Windows are typically rectangular, one-over-one double-hung windows, although top-floor apartments often have tall windows set with Gothic-style lancet windows ornamented with stone tracery.

The building has relatively little applied ornament, most of which is focused on the first floor around entrances, at the top of projecting bays, and along the building's roofline. First-floor ornament, more easily viewed by pedestrians, is both stone-carved medieval figures and tracery, accompanied by decorative-metal lanterns, while upper-floor ornament is mostly boldly-carved gargoyle figures, vertical finials, intricate tracery, and crenellation, all typical of the Gothic Revival architectural style. The building's roof parapet is crenellated and ornamented with simple Gothic-style finials in the manner of a late medieval English Gothic palace.

6901 Oglesby has two street entrances an automobile entrance for the building garage in the easternmost bay facing E. 69th St. and paired with a small pedestrian service entrance; and an elaborately-detailed main entrance facing S. Oglesby Ave. This main entrance projects outward into the building's front yard facing Oglesby and is a boldly-modeled, Gothic Revival-style entrance porch dominated by an open archway, carved tracery, lanterns, twin flagpoles and a crennelated roofline. Above this entrance is a finely-carved medieval shield surrounded by tightly interlaced foliate ornament and bearing the building's address, "6901." The building's doorway is deeply recessed at the rear of this entrance porch, which is vaulted and paved with blueish-green flagstones. Double wood-paneled doors have diamond-paned leaded glass that match leaded-glass sidelights and Gothic-arched transoms, all set within a slightly-pointed Gothic stone archway.

First-floor public spaces

6901 Oglesby has an exceptionally well-detailed set of first-floor public rooms, including a mail vestibule, small anteroom, main reception room and two elevator lobbies, as well as an outdoor, open-air terrace atop the garage roof which is accessed from the main reception room. The combination of spaces, with their fine finishes in traditional historic materials such as wood and plaster, create an elegant transition from the outer world to the more private apartments.





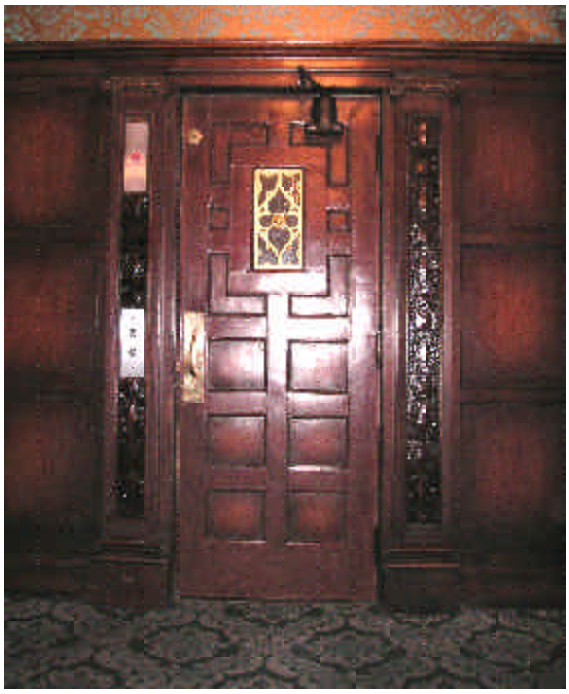
Inside the building's inner door, built of wood and decorated with leaded and stained glass, the building's anteroom is paneled with a high wooden wainscot and leads, through a pair of Gothic-style arches, to a large central reception room.





The reception room is wood-paneled from floor to ceiling and has an elaborately-detailed plaster ceiling.





6901 Oglesby's two tenant elevator lobbies have tall wood-paneled wainscoting and beautifully-paneled wood elevator doors. Each lobby serves only two apartments per floor.

Top left: The smaller of the two elevator lobbies, just off the anteroom and serving the westernmost apartments. Top right: The elevator door in the western elevator lobby is flanked by finely-carved pilasters ornamented with Ionic capitals in the Classical architectural tradition.

Right: A view of the larger elevator lobby, on the opposite side of the reception room, which serves the easternmost apartments.



The mail vestibule is elaborately floored with square and polygonal tiles forming abstract, geometric patterns, while square and rectangular wall tiles form subtle wall patterns. Geometric metal grillework hide heating units. Mailbox alcoves flank the vestibule and are similarly tiled. Earth colors such as brown, tan, light burgundy dominate, with accents of blue and green. The vestibule also has historic ceiling light fixtures.

Tiled stairs lead to a single inner door of varnished wood and leaded glass, set within an elaborate rectangular surround with leaded glass sidelights and transoms. The leaded sidelights are further ornamented with stained-glass shields decorated with heraldic lions, while a stained-glass panel ornamented with a 16th-century sailing ship decorates the central transom.

Inside this door is the first of several interconnected spaces separated by wide arches that collectively serve as the building's first floor reception room and elevator lobbies. Just inside the inner door, a small anteroom to the larger reception room has high varnished-wood wainscot paneling and wood ceiling beams ornamented with classical-style leaf motives and medieval-style stenciling. Left of this space is an intimately-scaled elevator lobby with high wood wainscoting, one of two in the building. The elevator door is wood paneled and flanked with elaborately-carved Ionic-order wood pilasters.

Past the anteroom, through twin shallow Gothic-style arches, a large reception lobby occupies the center of the building's first floor. It has floor-to-ceiling varnished-wood paneling and an elaborately-detailed, Gothic-style plaster ceiling ornamented with Gothic-style tracery and detailed with stylized flowers and rosettes picked out in pastel colors. Windows along the northern wall look out onto E. 69th St., while a set of wide steps on the south wall lead to multi-paned French doors, a small covered outdoor loggia, and a rear open-air terrace built over the garage. The terrace itself is simply detailed with a painted concrete floor and brick-and-limestone retaining walls.

On the far side of the large reception room is a single Gothic-style archway leading to a second, elevator lobby, larger in scale than the first but also ornamented with high wood-paneled varnished wainscoting, wood ceiling beams, and a wood-paneled elevator door similar to that in the first elevator lobby.

These first-floor public spaces are very finely detailed, including a plethora of wood paneling, carved Classical-style pilasters around elevator doors, elaborate Gothic-style plaster ceilings, and wood ceiling beams, stenciled with medieval-style figures such as mythological griffins. Archway surrounds are handsomely carved with moldings and elaborately-detailed flower motives.

Architect Paul Frederick Olsen

The architect of the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building, **Paul Frederick Olsen (circa 1890-1946)**, is best known for his handsomely designed apartment buildings in Chicago. He began architectural practice in the 1910s, designing small-scale apartment buildings such as the three-story apartment building on the southwest corner of W. Surf St. and N. Cambridge







Top right: The side and rear elevations of 6901 Oglesby are finished in face brick, rather than common brick. Bottom: The building's rear terrace, built over an enclosed 36-car garage, is entered from a sheltered loggia accessed from the building's reception room. Top left: Although the terrace is simply detailed with a painted concrete floor, its retaining wall has handsome brick details.

Ave., built in 1915 and part of the Surf-Pine Grove Chicago Landmark District designated in 2007.

The period of his greatest output, however, was the 1920s, and he is one of several significant architects who worked with developers to create apartment buildings in Chicago's fashionable lakefront neighborhoods. For middle-class tenants, he designed several rental buildings at 71st Pl. and Jeffery Blvd. in the South Shore neighborhood that are part of the Jeffery-Cyril Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places; these include the Spanish Colonial Revival-style at 1966-74 E. 71st Pl. built in 1928, and the Jeffery Terrace Apartments at 7130 S. Jeffery, designed in 1929 in the visually "jazzy" Art Deco architectural style.

For more upscale clients, Olsen built a variety of cooperative buildings. These include a 12-story building at 707 W. Junior Terrace in the Buena Park section of Uptown. Built in 1926, it contained just one apartment per floor, plus a two-story penthouse. In the Hyde Park neighborhood, Olsen's most prominent design is the Vista Homes cooperative at 5830-44 S. Stony Island Ave. Overlooking the northern end of Jackson Park and the Museum of Science and Industry, the 17-story building was designed in the Gothic Revival architectural style and touted at the time of its construction in 1925-27 as the largest cooperative building in the world with its 120 apartments. Built just before 6901 Oglesby, the Vista Homes also was built with an two-story enclosed parking garage attached to the apartment building meant to house more than 100 automobiles. In newspaper accounts of the period, it was claimed to be the "World's 1st Co-Op garage."

Besides 6901 Oglesby, Olsen is known to have designed a number of other apartment buildings in the South Shore neighborhood. These include an eight-story English Gothic-style cooperative building at 6738 S. Oglesby Ave. that was finished in 1928. For Harold C. Costello, with whom Olsen worked on 6901 Oglesby, the architect also designed an eight-story cooperative building at 6922 S. Jeffery Ave. in 1927.

CHICAGO APARTMENT BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building, with its gracefully restrained Gothic Revival-style exterior and luxuriously-detailed first-floor public spaces, exemplifies the use of historic architectural styles that reached its apex in Chicago in the 1920s. Traditional styles such as Classicism and its many variants, plus medieval-influenced styles such as Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival, had long been favored by both Chicago developers and residents. Non-historic, innovative architectural styles such as the Chicago School, the Prairie style, and influences from progressive Central European architectural movements such as the Viennese Secession were used at varying times for apartment hotels and for middle- and working-class apartments. However, Chicago's elite preferred the time-honored Classical and medieval architectural styles that traditionally conferred social respectability. Although not marketed to the most elite of Chicago families, 6901 Oglesby sought through the association of its finely-crafted Gothic

Revival-style forms and details to impart an aura of good taste, fine manners, and propriety that Chicago's upper-class families cherished and its striving upper-middle class sought to emulate.

Architectural styles and working- and middle-class apartment buildings
The architectural tastes of working- and middle-class Chicagoans, although influenced by tradition, also were much influenced by fashions of the day. Small flat buildings, built by the thousands from the 1870s through the 1920s for working- and middle-class families, almost always had some kind of ornament, usually historic, to soften their otherwise "cookie-cutter" appearances. In the case of brick two- and three-flats, such ornament could be as simple as different brick colors used for a row of otherwise identical buildings. More often, ornament would be found decorating door surrounds, window lintels, porches and cornices. Most commonly, the style of this ornament was classical in nature, ranging from Italianate for the earliest examples of such flat buildings to more authentically correct classical ornament seen in the early 1900s.

However, the work of progressive Chicago architects did "trickle down" to middle-class apartment construction. Some middle-class apartment buildings by the 1910s began to show the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's innovative Prairie style. Horizontal proportions, unusually-detailed door surrounds, wide overhanging eaves, and rectangular leaded-glass windows began to be seen in some apartment buildings in Chicago. Also, the influx of Central European builders, craftsman, and laborers saw the emergence of progressive Austrian, Czech and German architectural forms, including but not limited to, boldly abstracted and geometric door surrounds, as well as pilaster and pier capitals.

Then, by 1929, just before the stock market collapse and the onset of the Great Depression, the Art Deco architectural style, typically called "modernistic" in contemporary news reports and loosely based on the innovative architecture and decorative arts shown at the 1925 *Exposition des Arts-Decoratifs* in Paris, began to supplant classicism, medievalism, and earlier progressive styles such as Prairie in middle-class apartment building designs. The new style's boldly-abstracted floral motives and sharp-angled zigzags and chevrons were widely used for larger common-corridor apartment buildings and apartment hotels, although some elite cooperative apartments, including two on Astor Street designed by Philip Maher, also used variations on the style.

Architectural styles and upper-middle and upper-class apartment buildings
Well-to-do Chicagoans in the 19th century, though, preferred single-family houses to apartment buildings, seeing apartments as socially inferior and even somewhat degenerate. The 1880s began to see this stigma lift with the advent in Chicago of Parisian-type "flats" buildings that imitated row houses and which were designed in the decade's most fashionable styles, including Victorian Gothic, Second Empire and Queen Anne. The Hotel St. Benedict Flats at 40-52 W. Chicago Ave. (a designated Chicago Landmark) remains as the earliest surviving example of these first-generation prestigious flat buildings.

Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, apartment buildings for the upper-middle class began to be built on the Near North Side. A common style was a variation on the Chicago School, with











Architectrual styles used for Chicago apartment buildings have ranged widely, including both historic and non-historic styles. Examples include (top left) the Chicago School bays and sculptural simplicity of the Commodore Apartments in the Surf-Pine Grove Chicago Landmark District; the historic Classical and Gothic Revival styles of 1550 N. State St. (top right) and 1120 N. Lake Shore Dr. (middle left); the progressive Central European influences seen in the entrance to an apartment building in the Arlington-Deming District (middle right); and (left) the "modernistic" ornament characteristic of the non-historic Art Deco style as used in the Belle Shore Aparment Hotel (a designated Chicago Landmark.)

relatively unadorned masonry walls broken by continuously-vertical round and three-sided bays. The McConnell Apartments at Division and Astor (part of the Astor Street Chicago Landmark District) is a fine example of the use of this originally-commercial architectural style for residential apartments.

By 1910, however, as the first wave of truly high-end apartment buildings in Chicago began to be built in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood along both East and North Lake Shore Drives, the Classical and Tudor Revival styles began their dominance in the hearts and tastes of the "striving" and the "arrived." Benjamin Marshall's Marshall Apartments at 1100 N. Lake Shore Dr., built in 1906 (demolished) and widely considered the first elite apartment building, was built in a red brick-and-white trim variation on the Colonial Revival, albeit much bigger than any Colonial building had been at eight stories in height. Nearby, Howard Van Doren Shaw's 1130 N. Lake Shore Dr. was built in an English Gothic Revival-style that, with its continuous projecting bays and crennelated roofline, was not dissimilar to the style used by Paul Frederick Olsen for the later 6901 Oglesby building. Then, in 1912, Benjamin Marshall again set a standard for luxury and chic with the 1550 North Lake Shore Drive apartment building. Designed with a stunningly-white terra cotta skin and opulent French Classical-style ornament, Marshall's building convinced wealthy Chicagoans that apartment living might indeed be not just respectable, but preferable to increasingly expensive and bothersome single-family houses.

So, when the building boom of the 1920s began, and dozens of upscale apartment buildings were constructed, the styles used until 1929 were restrained versions of the Classical and medieval styles. Although apartment living was now respectable, even glamorous with its "penthouse" and "cliff dweller" connotations, upper- and upper-middle-class families sought visual restraint and luxury without flash. Both contemporary writers and modern-day historians have commented that the more exclusive apartment buildings of the 1920s were the least visually "flashy," while middle-class apartment buildings and the more transient apartment hotels used more exuberant, and as the 1920s ended, the more exotic to draw tenants.

Hence, the relatively visual "quiet" and respectability of 6901 Oglesby's exterior, paired with its handsomely-finished first-floor reception spaces, was meant to convey an air of exclusivity, taste, and culture. Traditional building materials such as red brick and gray Bedford limestone were used in restrained fashion. Ornament was placed judiciously around the building's entrance and along its roofline for the greatest visibility and effect. More unusually, the building's massing and in-and-out arrangement of wall planes was executed with a degree of picturesque asymmetry that provided visual interest without an over-reliance on ornament.

LATER HISTORY

From the time of its opening in 1929, the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building was occupied by a cross-section of South Shore professionals and businessmen. Apartment owners typically were professionals in the fields of medicine and law; bankers and commodity traders; and owners of small- and medium-sized companies.

In mid-1933, at the depth of the Great Depression, the 6901 Oglesby building corporation defaulted on its mortgage. Unlike many cooperatives, which were forced to convert to rental apartment buildings in the lean years of the 1930s, 6901 Oglesby was able to refinance. It has remained a cooperative to this day.

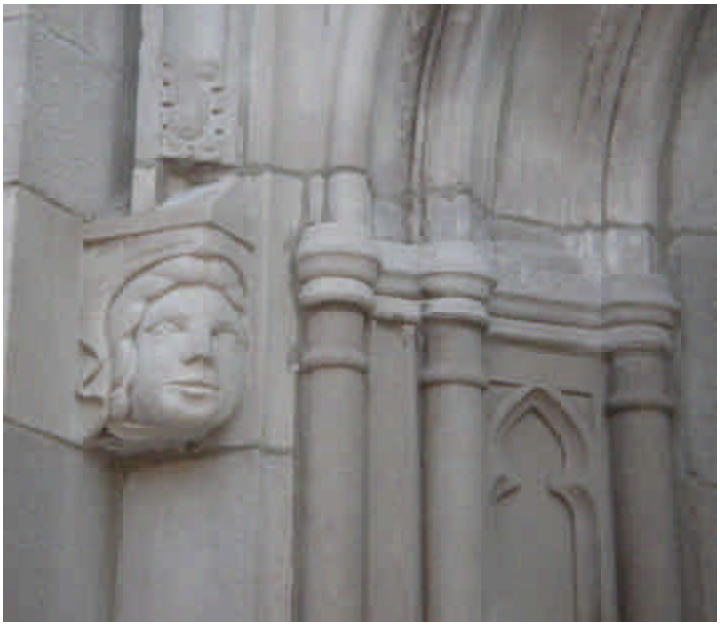
In the years following, 6901 Oglesby remained home to financially-successful and socially well-connected South Shore families, many of whom belonged to local social clubs such as the South Shore Country Club and the Bryn Mawr Women's Club. Among those who resided in the building during its first forty years were William E. Crocombe, president of the American Forge Co.; Homer E. Niesz, manager of industrial relations of the Commonwealth Edison Co.; Joseph B. Zimmers, secretary-treasurer of the Herron-Zimmers Molding Co.; Dr. Robert E. Wilson, president of the Pan American Petroleum and Transport Co.; Frank E. Glover, a member of the Chicago Board of Trade; Guy G. Fox, vice-president of Armour and Co.; inventor Albert C. Fischer; contractor John W. Snyder, president of John W. Snyder & Co., general contractors; Dr. Frederick W. Moeller, a founder of Woodlawn Hospital; William M. Black, president of the Electro Alloy division of the American Brake Shoe Co.; Circuit Court Judge Leonard C. Reid; Charles B. Nolte, president of the Crane Co.; John R. Roney, Sr., founder of the Consumers Sanitary Coffee and Butter Stores Co., a 350-store grocery chain in the Chicago area that became part of the larger Kroger grocery store chain; real estate and insurance broker Leonard J. Malone; John Sarther, president of the central distributing division of the Consolidated Foods Corp.; Eugene E. Munger, vice-president of the Goodman-Munger Coal Co.; Dr. John F. Shallenberger; Paul L. Benshoof, Sr., vice-president of Encyclopedia Americana; Henry C. Forster, president of the Utah Radio Products Co.; Dr. Herbert E. Landes, professor and chairman of the department of urology in the Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine; O.T. Carson, chairman of the board of the Domestic Engineering Co., business magazine publishers; George W. Kemp Sr., chairman of real-estate firm McKey & Poague (the firm that had originally sold apartments in the building for developer Costello); Dr. Patrick H. McNulty, president of the Chicago Medical Society; and Mrs. Mabel Lewis Rockwell, one of Chicago's first policewomen.

In the last 40 years, as South Shore became a majority African-American neighborhood, 6901 Oglesby has seen numerous African-American professionals and businesspeople become owners in the building. These include Associate Cook County Circuit Judge Llwellyn Greene-Thapedi; CBS-TV reporter and national morning anchorwoman Michelle Clark, who was killed in an airplane crash at Midway Airport in December 1972; Charles Coles, owner of Army and Lou's Restaurant; classical singer William Warfield; architect Le Roy Hilliard; and Rev. Dr. Calvin Morris, director of the Chicago Community Renewal Society.

The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building was rated "orange" in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. It also was one of the apartment buildings featured in historian Neil Harris's *Chicago Apartments: A Century of Lakefront Luxury*, which documented Chicago's finest apartment buildings.









The 6901 Ogelsby Cooperative Apartment Building is finely detailed on its exterior with ornament in traditional building materials, including red brick, gray Bedford limestone, and decorative metal.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building epitomizes the historically important theme of tall apartment buildings in the economic development and architectural history of Chicago.

- 6901 Oglesby also represents the importance of cooperative apartments, where individuals could own their own apartments, as an important land-ownership innovation in Chicago during the 1920s.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building is a handsome and particularly noteworthy example of a 1920s-era tall apartment building, a significant building type in the history of Chicago's lakefront neighborhoods.

- 6901 Oglesby is a distinguished example of the English Gothic Revival architectural style, one of several historic architectural styles important in defining the historic character of Chicago's neighborhoods.

- 6901 Oglesby is beautifully detailed on its exterior with traditional building materials, including red brick and gray Bedford limestone.

- 6901 Oglesby possesses a visually refined and distinctive group of first-floor public spaces, including a reception room, vestibules and elevator lobbies, finely appointed with decorative tile work, wood paneling, leaded and stained glass, decorative metal fixtures, plasterwork, and decorative painting and stenciling.

Integrity Criteria

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

The 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building possesses excellent exterior physical integrity, displaying through its siting, scale, setbacks and overall design its historic relationship to the South Shore neighborhood. It retains its historic overall exterior form and almost all historic exterior materials and detailing. Its primary first-floor public rooms (reception room, tenant elevator lobbies, and vestibules) also retain almost all of their historic integrity in terms of paneling, ceiling ornament, and other detailing.

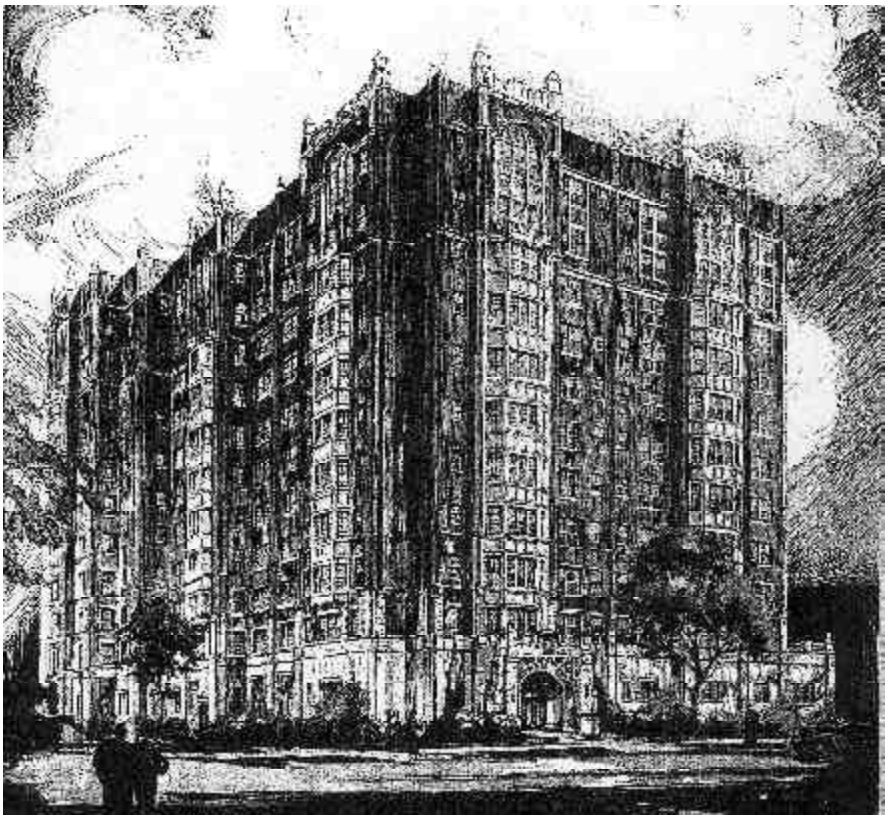
Changes to the buildng's exterior include the replacement of original window sash with newer multi-paned window sash. Small sections of the building's rooftop parapet have had repair tuckpointing where mortar is whiter and visually more dominant than the tuckpointing found elsewhere on the building. With these very minor changes, 6901 Oglesby is remarkably well-preserved in terms of its exterior and primary first-floor public rooms (reception room, tenant elevator lobbies, and vestibules).

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered the most important to preserve the historic and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

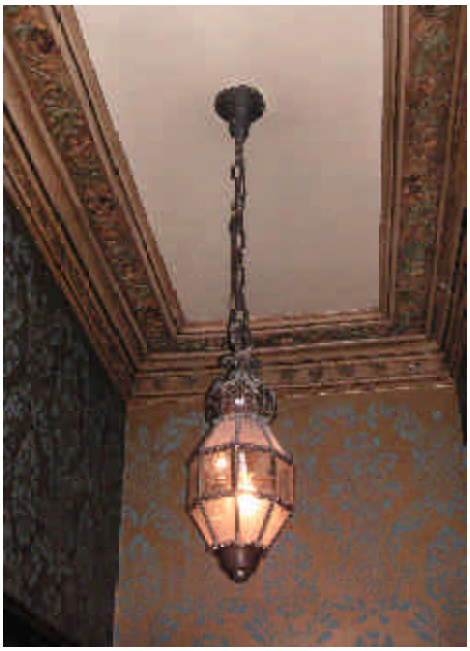
Based on its evaluation of the 6901 Oglesby Cooperative Apartment Building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

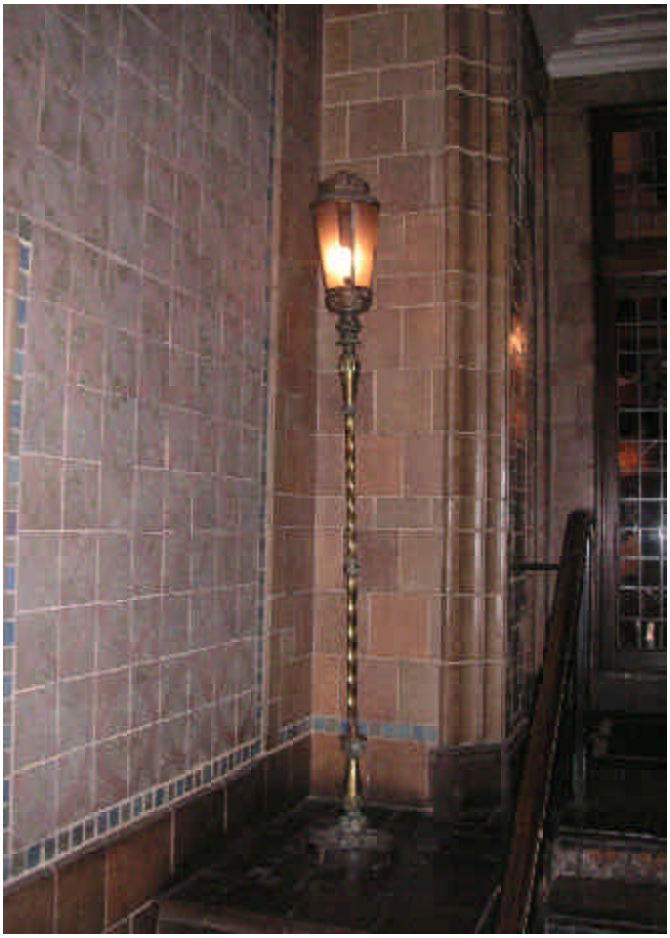
- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and
- First-floor public spaces, including the mail vestibule, anteroom, main reception room, and two tenant elevator lobbies.





6901 Oglesby retains excellent historic physical integrity. Top: A rendering from the building's sales prospectus. Bottom: A photograph from late 2007.





6901 Oglesby has beautiful tilework in the mail vestibule and historic light fixtures in both the vestibule and within the anteroom, reception room, and elevator lobbies.



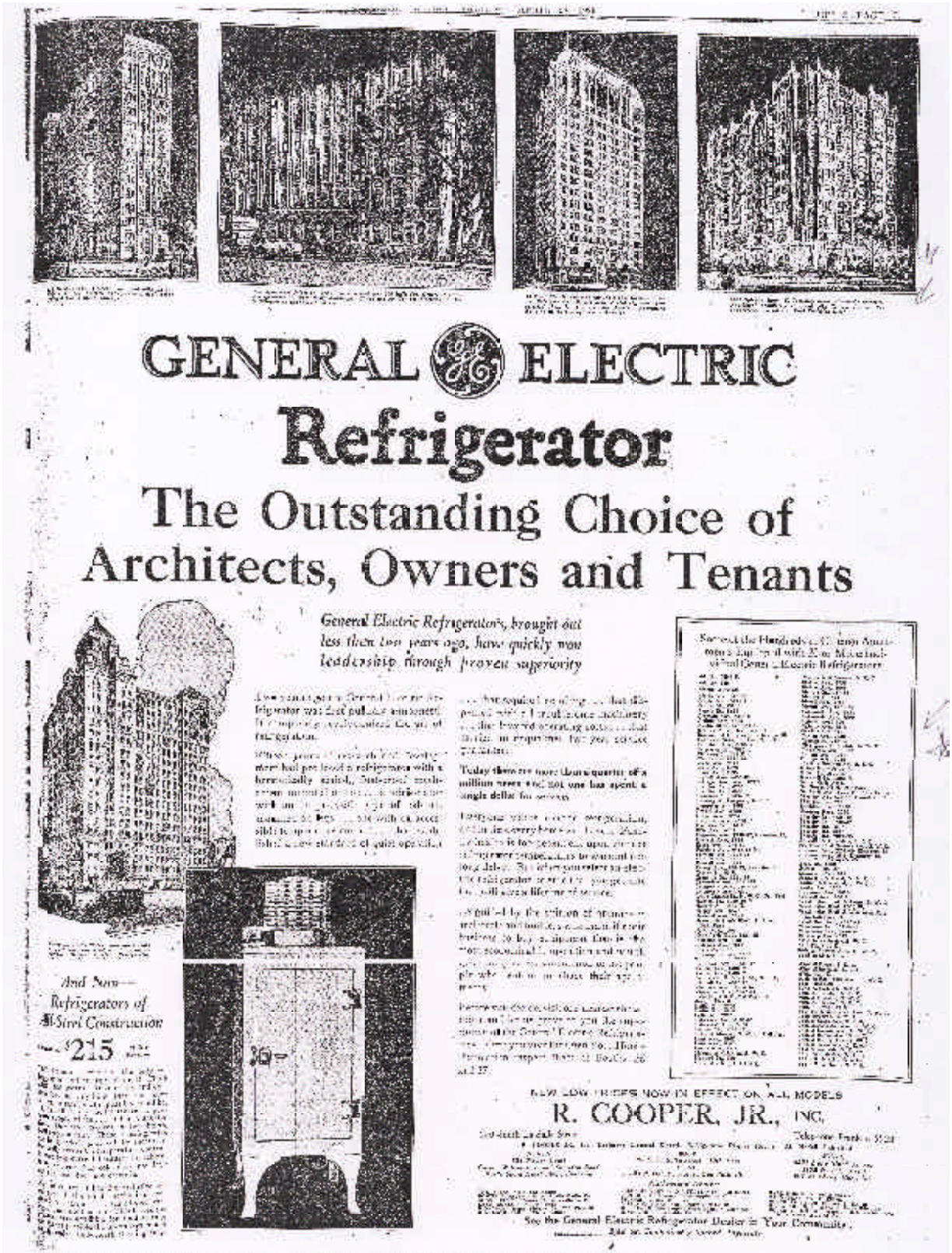


Photographs of stained glass in the inner doorway separating the mail vestibule from the anteroom, the decorative plaster ceiling in the reception room, and wood ceiling beams, ornamented with a variety of details including mythological griffins, in the anteroom and elevator lobbies.









A *Chicago Tribune* advertisement trumpeting the use of General Electric refrigerators in several tall apartment buildings constructed in the late 1920s, including 6901 Oglesby (top right).

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A *Chicago Tribune* advertisement from March 1928 advertising apartments at 6901 Oglesby.

Architect Paul Frederick Olsen, the designer of 6901 Oglesby, also designed several other apartment buildings on Chicago's South Side. (Right) The Vista Homes at 5830-44 S. Stony Island Ave., built in 1925-27 as a cooperative apartment building, was built with an attached two-story, 100-car enclosed garage touted in the press as the "World's 1st Co-Op garage."



Olsen also designed rental apartment buildings in the South Shore neighborhood for developer Walter F. Kinnucan, including (bottom left) the Gothic-detailed Bedford Villa Apartments at 7128-38 S. Cyril Ave., built in 1928; and (bottom right) the Jeffery Terrace Apartments at 7130 S. Jeffery Blvd., built in 1929 in the newly-fashionable Art Deco architectural style.





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Illustrations
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Edgewater Historical Society: p. 5 (bottom).
From Harris, *Chicago Apartments*: p. 6 (top), 34 (top).
From Westfall, "From Homes to Towers:" pp. 6 (bottom left and right), p. 9 (top), 25 (top right, middle left).
From Baird and Warner, *A Portfolio of Fine Apartment Homes*: p. 9 (bottom left).
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